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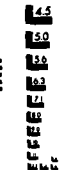
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AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

STUDENT REPORT

GHQ AIR FORCE:
POLITICAL ORPHAN OR EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

MAJOR DAVID J. BOYLES 84-0280

"insights into tomorrow"

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REPORT NUMBER 84-0280

TITLE GHQ AIR FORCE: POLITICAL ORPHAN OR EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

AUTHOR(S) MAJOR DAVID J. BOYLES, USAF

FACULTY ADVISOR COLONEL ROBERT W. KLINE, ACSC/CV

SPONSOR U.S. AIR FORCE HISTORICAL RESEARCH CENTER

Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of
requirements for graduation.

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE
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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER 84-0280	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. AD-A146296	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) GHQ AIR FORCE: POLITICAL ORPHAN OR EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS	5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED	
	6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER	
7. AUTHOR(s) David J. Boyles, Major, USAF, 9 Apr 48	8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)	
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS ACSC/EDCC, MAXWELL AFB AL 36112	10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS	
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS ACSC/EDCC, MAXWELL AFB AL 36112	12. REPORT DATE FEBRUARY 1984	
	13. NUMBER OF PAGES 25	
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (If different from Controlling Office)	15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED	
	15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE	
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) STATEMENT "A" Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Investigates whether GHQ Air Force was formed as a political expedient to stifle the bid for a separate air force or whether it served a useful purpose in meeting national objectives. Examines the seven-year history of the organization from 1935-1942, giving special attention to its antecedents and accomplishments. Devotes major sections to conflicts between the GHQ Air Force and the Air Corps and the development of doctrine. Concludes with lessons on the contribution of the GHQ Air Force and its mistakes in advocating the doctrine of strategic bombardment.		

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major David J. Boyles was commissioned in 1970 after graduating from the United States Air Force Academy with a BS in Economics. Upon completion of navigator training at Mather Air Force Base, California, he qualified in the F-4 at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, with subsequent flying assignments in Korea, South Vietnam, Thailand, and England. In 1976, he entered the School of Systems and Logistics at the Air Force Institute of Technology and graduated in 1977 with an MS degree in Logistics Management. For the next three years, he served as a munitions maintenance officer in the Directorate of Distribution, Ogden Air Logistics Center. In September 1980, Major Boyles returned to rated duties in the F-4 and was assigned to the 52nd Tactical Fighter Wing at Spangdahlem Air Base, West Germany. In August 1983, he entered the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

Major Boyles is a senior navigator with 1,600 flying hours. He is credited with flying 121 combat missions in Southeast Asia, 43 of which were over North Vietnam.

He has contributed several book reviews to Air University Review and authored two flight safety articles for USAFE's monthly periodical, Airscoop: "The Value of History" (June 1981) and "Who's Minding the Store" (September 1982).

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PREFACE

The author appreciates the efforts of several individuals who were instrumental in this effort. Colonel Robert Kline and Mr. John Smith of the Air Command and Staff College played vital roles in advising the author and helping to edit the work. Lieutenant Colonel John F. Shiner, AF/XOXID, and Mr. Cargill Hall of the US Air Force Historical Research Center were helpful in selecting the topic and providing resource material. The author also acknowledges the assistance of Mr. Dewitt S. Copp. And, finally, Ms. Pat Stewart made a significant contribution to the project through her typing and proofreading skills.

Subject to clearance, this manuscript will be submitted to Air University Review for consideration.

The author hopes that this manuscript will be useful in providing a different interpretation to the lessons of history. The Air Force owes a considerable debt to the air pioneers of the 1930s, but it must recognize that, in the aftermath of World War II, these men interpreted their accomplishments and wrote the history used today in developing future doctrine. Only by examining the facts and applying objective analysis can future generations of Air Force leaders hope to learn from the successes and failures of their predecessors.

THE GHQ AIR FORCE: POLITICAL ORPHAN OR EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

The GHQ Air Force, in the light of subsequent experience, was a compromise that contributed little to the advancement of military aviation in the United States.¹

General Headquarters (GHQ) Air Force, formed on 1 March 1935, was the nation's principal combat aviation arm for almost seven years. The organization fostered the strategic doctrine employed by the greatest air force ever built and, in two years prior to war, formed the training nucleus necessary to expand the Army Air Corps to unprecedented size. Why then do many historians feel that the GHQ Air Force was ineffective? At the time of its formation, Billy Mitchell derided the fledgling organization as a "subtrafuge"; but the Chief of the Air Corps, General Benjamin Foulois, claimed that it was "the most important and forward . . . step ever taken to secure . . . striking power." The GHQ Air Force was, and is, the subject of considerable controversy. To appreciate its contribution to the development of air power, one must understand the decision that spawned the organization and the resulting controversy. Entwined in the story is the search for doctrine and the issue of a separate air force.

Birth of an Air Force

The Army's General Headquarters was proposed by General John J. Pershing in the aftermath of World War I. After experiencing so many problems in organizing the American Expeditionary Force in 1917, he felt that a pre-organized, mobile staff was necessary to form the nucleus of a future expeditionary force.² Designated units would deploy to "flesh-out" the headquarters and form a fighting force in case of a national emergency.

As it evolved, General Headquarters consisted of four armies, nine corps areas, an armored force, reserves, and an organization responsible for harbor defense. Missing from the original organization was a tactical air force, but this was not an oversight. Chief of the Army Air Service, Major General Mason Patrick, had recommended adoption of a GHQ Air Force in 1923, but his proposal fell on deaf ears even though it was supported by numerous boards and official studies.³

General Foulois became Chief of the Air Corps in 1931, a time of relative prosperity as the Air Corps was expanding under the five-year period covered by the Air Corps Act of 1926. Foulois favored a separate air force independent of the General Staff and responsible for its own budget and promotion list. As a fallback position, he advocated forming a GHQ air force. To test this idea, the Army, in several exercises, established provisional GHQ air forces as the combat air arm during the early 1930s.

As 1932 dawned, prosperity had apparently faded into the past. Depression weakened the nation's vitality and led to the election of a president who favored social programs over military spending. The Air Corps, indeed all forms of the military, was asked to identify the mission that it could fulfill with reduced resources. In its response, the Air Corps stressed independent air operations rather than tactical support of the Army, but the idea did not meet the approval of the War Department. Assistant Chief of Staff Hugh Drum formed a commission to study the problem. The Drum Board's report in October 1933 stressed limitations of Army aviation and recommended establishment of a GHQ Air Force within an Air Corps ceiling of 2,320 aircraft.

The GHQ Air Force was not established as a result of the Drum Board's recommendation, but events that would lead directly to its founding were rapidly snowballing. Suspecting collusion in bids for airmail contracts,

President Franklin Roosevelt cancelled agreements with private firms on 10 February 1934 and ordered the Air Corps into action. The Air Corps carried the mail for more than three months, but the results of its operations were judged a disaster.⁴ It not only suffered 12 fatalities from 66 crashes; it could carry but 40 percent of the cargo handled by private firms at double the expense. The public outcry was tremendous, and General Foulois was branded a scapegoat.

As if his problems with the mail were not enough, General Foulois also came under attack for questionable procurement practices in the Air Corps. Subcommittee No. 3 (Rogers Committee) of the House Military Affairs Committee opened hearings to investigate the Air Corps' practice of negotiating aircraft procurement contracts rather than subjecting them to competitive bids. In the wake of the airmail disaster, the committee viewed Foulois as a likely target and called for his relief. Roosevelt bowed to political pressure, and, in a letter to Secretary of War George Dern, inquired as to the Air Corps' state of preparedness.

Dern called for another study and appointed former Secretary of War Newton Baker to chair a board that would investigate the role, size, and organization of the Army's air arm. The board was biased toward the traditional ground-oriented approach, but this was not completely by design. Several eminent aviators, including Orville Wright and Charles Lindbergh, had declined invitations to serve on the board. Nevertheless, bias was introduced not only in the makeup of the board but also in the system of rules. The recorder, Major Albert Brown of the General Staff, established the agenda; the conclusions of earlier boards would be the point of departure for discussion; and General Staff members would author the final report.⁵

And bias was reflected in the final report published on 18 July 1934. The board concluded that the "Air Invasion (and Air Defense) of the United States . . . are conceptions of those who fail to realize the inherent limitations of aviation and consider ocean barriers." It thus found no reason to reorganize the air sections of either the War or Navy Departments.⁶ It repeated many of the recommendations made by the Drum Board, including the call for a GHQ Air Force, and cited the need to reintegrate flyers into the fabric of the Army under General Staff control. Jimmy Doolittle, a member of the board, filed a minority opinion calling for a separate air force, but General Foulois, also a member, did not sign Doolittle's statement. In fact, Foulois was mute through most of the hearings. Attacks by the Rogers Committee had forced him to devote primary concern to personal survival, but his support for a GHQ Air Force probably made the Baker Board findings more palatable.⁷

Meeting coincidentally with the Baker Board was the presidentially appointed Federal Aviation Commission under the chairmanship of Clark Howell, editor of the Atlanta Constitution. The Howell Commission had the larger responsibility of surveying all aviation matters, both civil and military. Although this commission was not under the purview of the General Staff, it chose a conciliatory position and suggested that the recommendations of the Baker Board, particularly the proposed GHQ Air Force, should be implemented.

The President and the Secretary of War approved the findings of the Baker Board and set wheels in motion to form the GHQ Air Force seven months later. Reasons given for approving the organization included concern over the issue of a separate air force and desire to bring "undisciplined" aviators back into the Army fold. This rationale is open to question; but the underlying purpose of the GHQ Air Force--to provide the long-awaited air arm to General Headquarters--is irrefutable. Now, the nation possessed a truly complete defensive mechanism to prosecute future wars and support national policy.

The organization specified in the Baker Board report called for some 40 percent of Air Corps' resources, including all bombardment, attack, and pursuit aircraft.⁸ The chief of the Air Corps and the commanding general of the GHQ Air Force, both reporting to the chief of staff, would divide responsibility for Army aviation. The Air Corps would oversee supply, procurement, and doctrine and GHQ Air Force would train and employ Army aviation in combat. While professing unity of command, the Baker Board split aviation responsibilities and left no single spokesman for air. This fractionalism would fuel most arguments against the GHQ Air Force. General Foulois had bid earlier for total command of Army aviation, but Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur declined. He desired the heads of combat arms, including the Air Corps, to function strictly as administrators. As Foulois' advocacy of independent air operations became clearer and he began to flounder in difficulties with procurement and the airmail, the decision crystalized that Benny Foulois would never command the GHQ Air Force.⁹ That decision was difficult to reverse, even after Foulois' departure.

Care and Nurture for the Infant

The decision to activate GHQ Air Force was made in late 1934. Lieutenant Colonel Frank Andrews had been assigned earlier to General Staff Operations (G-3) to formulate plans for creation of the GHQ Air Force. It seemed only natural that Andrews would be chosen the first commander because he possessed the seniority, respect of other aviators, and personal qualifications necessary for command. Of equal importance, the hierarchy in the War Department considered him a "company man": this quality would prove useful in counterbalancing such air power radicals as Foulois.

Andrews formed his command at Langley Field, Virginia, on 1 March 1935. The striking arm of the GHQ Air Force consisted of three wings: the 1st Wing commanded by Brigadier General Hap Arnold at March Field, California; the 2nd Wing under Brigadier General Conger Pratt at Langley; and the 3rd Wing commanded by Colonel Gerald Brant at Barksdale Field, Louisiana. The GHQ Air Force initially found itself with less than half the 980 aircraft and 1,245 pilots recommended by the Baker Board. Andrews' staff was a litany of air power enthusiasts who would rise to major command roles in the coming war: George Kenney, Hugh Knerr, Joe McNarney, Pete Quesada, Tony Frank, and Walter Weaver.

In speaking before the Indiana American Legion shortly after taking command, General Andrews set the framework for the GHQ Air Force's contribution to defense.¹⁰ Four field armies and the air force would be the main combat elements, but the armies would be skeletonized during times of peace. Long lead times required to equip and train air elements meant that the air force must be complete and forward deployed at the outbreak of hostilities. Aviation would assume an independent role during initial engagements with the enemy. Initial objectives would be counter air aimed at destroying enemy aviation on the ground. When Andrews broached the subject of independent operations, he stepped on the toes of the General Staff that considered him an ally. The Army establishment soon realized that Frank Andrews was the principal torchbearer for independent strategic air operations.

The combat effectiveness of the GHQ Air Force improved greatly during its first year of operation. The report of the 1935 Field Service Test showed increases in night flying, instrument proficiency, gunnery, bombing, and navigation. Installation of instrument equipment was transforming a flying

club that operated under visual flight rules into an all-weather fighting force, and airframes were redistributed to provide more homogeneity. Other improvements were increased in-commission rates and practical application of the Air Corps' first written doctrine.¹¹

The development of doctrine would play a key role in the contribution of GHQ Air Force. But doctrine, as always, was limited by the equipment used to implement new ideas. The GHQ Air Force operated with poor equipment when it was first formed, but the situation soon improved. Earlier in 1933, the Air Corps identified four projects as aircraft requirements and distributed the specifications to contractors.¹² The most immediate impact centered on Project B, which called for development of a bomber with speeds between 200 and 250 miles per hour and ranges between 1,020 and 2,200 miles while it carried a bomb load of 2,000 pounds. Three prototypes were submitted for the flyoff. The Martin (B-12) and Douglas (B-18) bombers were equipped with two engines. Of the two, the B-18 was superior, but most attention was drawn to the third entry, Boeing Model 299, a four-engine marvel later named the B-17 and dubbed by one enterprising Seattle reporter as a "Flying Fortress." The aircraft appeared in the summer of 1935, and testing commenced that fall. During those tests, the Boeing entry crashed and the contract was awarded to Douglas, but the Flying Fortress represented such a significant advance in capability that 13 aircraft were ordered for test and evaluation.

The first B-17s were delivered to the GHQ Air Force and assigned to the 2nd Bomb Group at Langley Field in early 1937. The aircraft proved useful in gathering headlines to promote the cause of air power. The public viewed the Flying Fortress in the thirties with much the same admiration as it views the space shuttle today. New capabilities in Western Hemispheric defense,

including aircraft range and coastal defense, were signaled by banner events in 1938 and early 1939. Previously unequalled range was demonstrated by the Pan American Goodwill Flight and the Chilean Disaster Relief Mission, the latter flown by the XB-1. Success in coastal defense was proven by locating the battleship Utah in a test off the West Coast and intercepting the Italian liner Rex some 700 miles off the Atlantic Coast. These events were usually staged in conjunction with major maneuvers and in close liaison with the media. The Air Corps, GHQ Air Force in particular, was making considerable noise with very few aircraft.

The aviators struggled to convince military and political powers that they had a legitimate mission and that their organization should be expanded. The former was difficult but the latter was practically impossible. When GHQ Air Force was formed, it possessed less than half the 980 aircraft authorized by the Baker Board, and, four years later, Commanding General Delos Emmons could count only 484 aircraft spread among 13 combat groups.¹³ This was the period of the Great Depression--a difficult time to form or equip any non-social program.

Problems: A House Divided

Harmony dissolved between the GHQ Air Force and Office, Chief of the Air Corps (OCAC) when the report of GHQ's 1935 Field Service Test was filed. This was predictable. A split in the Air Corps meant that no single airman spoke for the entire organization. Not until 1939 was the dispute over single authority resolved. Three problems surfaced with the report. General Andrews addressed two problems concerning base command and personnel policies. And the third problem was raised in the OCAC response when the new chief, Major General Oscar Westover, questioned unity of command in the Air Corps.

The first problem dealt with the status of base command. As originally envisioned, group and wing commanders in the GHQ Air Force did not command the installations where their units were stationed. Instead, the base commander reported to the corps area commander, a nonrated Army general. Andrews advanced a persuasive argument that commanders of tactical units reported to multiple authorities and exercised no control over the aerodrome environment and facilities directly affecting the morale and welfare of their units. The General Staff refuted the claim and supported the Baker Board.¹⁴ General Westover supported the GHQ Air Force position: the united front presented by Andrews and Westover tipped the scales in favor of the Air Corps. On 1 July 1936, the bases came under exempt status whereby wing commanders would command air base squadrons in their jurisdiction.¹⁵ At the same time, Andrews abolished mobile service squadrons and provided each tactical unit with the means for organic maintenance.

The second problem surfaced by Andrews, personnel assignments, was inevitable since no one individual short of the Chief of Staff governed all airmen. Andrews felt that he should select personnel for the GHQ Air Force and that OCAC should execute the selections. Personnel policies would be the responsibility of a board equally represented by the GHQ Air Force and OCAC. Sensing the possibility of an elite within the Air Corps, Westover disagreed with the Field Service Report because he felt that switches in personnel should be based on policy rather than board action. An even flow of personnel between operations and staff was necessary to broaden career perspectives.¹⁶ Viewing this as a symptom of a larger problem, the General Staff largely ignored the point of contention.

Of course, the larger problem was whether one airman should command all Army aviation functions, including the GHQ Air Force. Andrews did not address the issue in the Field Service Report, but Westover's indorsement did. He felt that the commander of the GHQ Air Force should report to the chief of the Air Corps during peacetime. Split authority fostered differences of opinion with no central arbitrator, redundant administration, and intra-service jealousy. A single aviation chief would allow closer relations between procurement, training, and operations and an evenhanded approach to personnel policies between the aviation arms.¹⁷ In rejecting Westover's recommendation, the General Staff cited the findings of the Baker Board and the necessity to separate command (GHQ Air Force) from staff (OCAC) functions. But Westover received some support for his position. Colonel William Browning of the Inspector General's office was empowered to form a commission to study Air Corps personnel matters. The Browning Board published its results on 7 January 1936 and called for integration of the GHQ Air Force into the Air Corps under command of the chief.¹⁸

Andrews disagreed. He felt that separation of Army aviation was unhealthy but that the GHQ Air Force should not be subordinate to the chief of the Air Corps. Instead, an elevated air authority, possibly a deputy chief of staff for air, should command both organizations. Andrews and Westover would raise the issue repeatedly, but the General Staff was reluctant to take charge of the delicate issue. The situation became thornier in mid-1936 when 1st Wing Commander Arnold, a strong supporter of an independent GHQ Air Force, switched allegiance after his appointment as assistant chief of the Air Corps. Arnold became chief on 30 September 1938 after Westover's untimely death in an aircraft accident and soon resolved the question of command authority.¹⁹

Other conflicts surfaced between the two organizations in the intervening years. One conflict involved the type of aircraft procured for the future. Taking the lead from the Air Corps Tactical School, the GHQ Air Force became a major proponent of strategic bombardment theory vis-a-vis the appearance of the B-17. But General Andrews still had to convince Westover in favor of the argument since his organization held the budget cards. Once again, the problem of scarce dollars raised its head: for the price of one B-17, the War Department could procure three B-18s. Tubby Westover was a company man and concurred with the General Staff in favoring the purchase of two-engine bombers. The issue boiled down to simple facts: the range of the B-18 was adequate for the coastal defense mission and more aircraft could be purchased at the price of the less expensive B-18. Andrews countered with the argument that bomb load and range were interchangeable: for shorter missions, the bomb load could be increased. The B-17 was not only more efficient; it offered far greater flexibility.²⁰ He was destined to lose the argument, at least temporarily. When war broke out in Europe on 1 September 1939, the original 13 Flying Fortresses delivered in 1937 were the only four-engine bombers available to the Air Corps.

Another bureaucratic battle, this time over mission, broke out in 1940 between the GHQ Air Force and the Air Corps. More than a year earlier, President Roosevelt had decreed an impressive rearmament program, specifically aircraft, to deter the threat posed by Nazi Germany. To train this budding air force, Arnold called on his most experienced flyers, the GHQ Air Force, but he was opposed by the new GHQ Air Force commander, General Delos Emmons, who believed that his organization should concentrate on air defense of the continental United States. Arnold saw no immediate air threat and believed that the next war would be fought over the enemy's territory, not the United

States. And, for that purpose, he needed to train a great air force. Emmons was quickly outmaneuvered by the dynamic Arnold. There was precedent for this decision. The new Chief of Staff, George Marshall, had earlier decided that General Headquarters would be responsible for training an army of some 92 divisions.²¹

Doctrine: Pen before Sword

Air Corps theorists and the GHQ Air Force, in particular, were at odds during the 1930s, not only with the War Department but with national policy as well. Following World War I and President Wilson's brief romance with the League of Nations, America retreated to isolation behind friendly borders and the immensity of two great oceans. The Depression only served to heighten this attitude: a defensive war machine was far less costly to maintain than an offensive one. Reflecting the mood of the nation, President Hoover, at the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1932, stated: "We shall enter no agreements committing us to any future course of action or which call for the use of force to preserve the peace."²²

Analysis of the defense budget in the pivotal thirties also reflects the national mood. Expenditures by the War and Navy Departments amounted to 25 percent of the Federal budget in 1930, but this percentage decreased over the next four years to approximately 10 percent for fiscal year 1934. From that point, the budget began to rise slowly in real terms and as a percentage of the Federal budget, but expenditures for defense did not reach 20 percent until 1940.²³ The defense budget did not reflect a decrease in security awareness as much as the spread of big government in the wake of the New Deal. However, the rise in spending by the Navy to near parity with the War Department by 1939 underscored the nation's defensive policies:

battleships and their flotillas were the prime defensive mechanisms of a nation isolated by the Atlantic and Pacific. The Air Corps budget was small throughout this period but not unreasonably so when compared with other combat arms. One thing was certain: the Air Corps would not expand at the expense of the Army until the president issued a directive aimed at expansion in late 1938.²⁴

Against this backdrop, the question arose as to the best way to incorporate this new engine of war into the nation's policy objectives. Numerous boards and commissions met repeatedly during the twenties and thirties to study the proper use of military aviation. Commission findings quite rightly emphasized a defensive posture, and defensive aviation, by its nature, shortens the range necessary to conduct operations. The first glimmer of hope for recognition of a long-range air mission came with the MacArthur-Pratt Agreement in 1931 when the chiefs of the Army and the Navy legitimized the Air Corps' mission of coastal defense. Given the defensive role, one other mission would be used to substantiate the need for long-range aviation: reinforcement of overseas possessions in Panama, Hawaii, and the Philippines.

Three doctrinal forms were beginning to take shape in Army aviation. The traditional school headed by the War Plans section of the General Staff emphasized tactical support of ground forces. General Foulis held that the primary mission was air superiority--control of the aerial battlefield.²⁵ Both missions could be interpreted as defensive in the sense of requiring short-range aircraft. The third doctrine was taking root at the Army's aviation think-tank, the Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS), which promoted the theory of strategic bombardment based on the writings of Giulio Douhet. The goal of strategic bombardment was destruction of the economic base that fuels

the war machine of industrial societies. Offensive aviation projected at long range was necessary to accomplish this mission.

With the founding of the GHQ Air Force, resolution of doctrinal differences was a prerequisite to establishing the mission of the new organization. A trial doctrine by General Charles Kilbourne of the War Plans section picked up the Foulois theme and emphasized counter air as the principal mission. Major Carl Spaatz (OCAC) criticized Kilbourne's effort because strategic bombardment was relegated to a secondary role. On 31 January 1935, Kilbourne countered with a proposal for a twofold hemispheric defense mission that would prevent the enemy from establishing air bases within range of the United States and insure destruction of those bases if they were established.²⁶ This mission was acceptable because it implied a strategic role.

At the same time, the Air Corps Tactical School was producing graduates imbued with a doctrine of offensive rather than defensive air power. The ACTS curriculum was based on a series of precepts. In case of war, the primary objective would be to break the enemy's will to resist, but an interim objective could be destruction of the enemy's armed forces. Cooperation between service elements would be necessary. Aviation would be tasked with the independent mission of attacking the enemy's national structure; therefore, plans for bombardment must recognize and target the industrial web. All future wars would begin with air action. Because of ocean barriers and the limited range of aircraft, the United States must improve aircraft capabilities or secure air bases on foreign soil. And, finally, the preferred target of offensive air power would be destruction of the enemy's national structure rather than his military forces.²⁷ The thinking at the tactical school was clearly not defensively oriented and, thus, not in concert with national

policy objectives. Other ideas were also suffering: since the "bomber boys" won the day, traditional roles of pursuit and attack were relegated to secondary status and began to wither.

The tactical school developed the doctrine of strategic bombardment; the only remaining requirement was to find the organization and vehicle to implement the plan. The GHQ Air Force was the organization because it allowed aviators to concentrate their resources under central direction of an experienced air staff rather than depend on piecemeal operations. Boeing provided the missing piece of the puzzle in 1937 with production of the B-17.

The General Staff was aware of the rumblings and machinations at the tactical school. The War Department sought either to squelch thoughts of independent air operations or at least restrict their spread. A Joint Army-Navy Board concluded in 1938 that the Air Corps would not be required to perform any mission beyond the range of the B-17. At the same time, Assistant Chief of Staff Stanley Embick reiterated the Army's support of the nation's defensive policy, placed limits on the GHQ Air Force's coastal defense mission, and questioned the superiority of the B-17.²⁸ As 1939 neared, General Andrews must have questioned his zealous behavior: his carefully designed GHQ staff was dismembered, and he was bypassed as the next chief of the Air Corps.

Changes: 1939-1942

The pivotal year 1939 saw the beginning of rapid changes. Two months earlier, President Roosevelt had announced that Hitler would be impressed only by a horizon blackened with aircraft and launched a massive program of rearmament. America's aviation industry would retool to an annual capacity of 10,000 aircraft.²⁹ The new Chief of the Air Corps, Hap Arnold, had his charter in hand.

Although traditionalists still ruled the roost in the War Department, the winds of change were blowing. General Andrews relinquished command of the GHQ Air Force to Major General Delos Emmons on 1 March 1939, and, on the same day, an organizational change brought GHQ Air Force under the wing of the Air Corps. This change eliminated the greatest source of antagonism and rivalry in the Air Corps. Arnold now commanded all Army aviation.

Most of the cry for a separate air force had been stilled by creation of the GHQ Air Force and the calming influence of Westover and Arnold. Frankly, Arnold was more concerned with the problems of expansion than with creation of a new organization.³⁰ General Marshall also felt that separation was ill-advised for two reasons: he viewed the Air Corps as an organizationally immature body with little staff experience, and he feared that the mission of tactical support for ground forces would be subordinated to independent air missions.³¹ Both perceptions were well-founded.

The Command and General Staff College and the National War College prepared officers for service on the General Staff, but aviators resisted attendance at these schools because they were centers of Army tradition. And, to some extent, Air Corps leaders supported this trend when they faced shortages in personnel: they reduced quotas assigned to the schools and to staffs in order to "flesh-out" operational units. In the report of the 1935 Field Service Test, General Andrews proposed to solve manning problems by filling nonpilot requirements from sources outside the Air Corps.³² These policies may have been well-intentioned, but they were divisive and tended to stunt the Air Corps' experience and growth.

Marshall's fears concerning the demise of tactical ground support proved prophetic: the Army retained its aviation arm for another eight years, but Air Corps emphasis on tactical air support diminished anyway. The process

actually began long before 1939. At the Air Corps Tactical School, George Kenney headed the attack phase of instruction in the late 1920s, but his reassignment in 1929 grounded innovation, if not the entire program.³³ By the mid-thirties, Air Corps planners viewed attack not from the perspective of close air support but deep interdiction. Poor performance by the A-17 attack aircraft brought its replacement by medium bombers. If the US Army needed a reminder of the sad state of its ground-air coordination, the success of the German blitzkrieg in Poland on 1 September 1939 surely brought the lesson home.

Renamed the Air Force Combat Command, the GHQ Air Force experienced several more changes, but the organization had largely outlived its usefulness. Arnold transformed it into a training command, but the real death knell was sounded by the threat. General Pershing formed General Headquarters to mobilize and respond to a single front, but World War II saw the United States engaged on two fronts in as many as five active theaters at one time.

Prior to the demise of the GHQ Air Force, the question of single command raised its head once more. On 19 November 1940, the GHQ Air Force was removed from the Air Corps to the command of Field Forces and aligned with General Headquarters. Marshall avoided the potential for disharmony by elevating Arnold to the position of deputy chief of staff, a position from which he could oversee all air activities. Arnold was due some help, which he received from Robert A. Lovett, the new Assistant Secretary of War for Air. Lovett immediately undertook the task of formally consolidating the air arm, and, on 20 June 1941, the Army Air Force was created. As the chief, Arnold commanded both the Office, Chief of the Air Corps and the Air Force Combat Command. Shortly after America's entry into the war, Air Force Combat Command and General Headquarters were dissolved in the most sweeping reorganization in

the Army since Elihu Root's reforms of 1903. The seven-year history of the GHQ Air Force came to an end.

Legacy: Past to Present

The history of the GHQ Air Force is a fascinating study in the battle between bureaucracy and emerging doctrine. Incredible forces bursting on the scene not only would bear fruit in the coming war but would forever alter the course of mankind. If the military could be characterized by malaise and largesse in the twenties, the same was not true in the thirties. New ideas and technology paving the way for change inevitably came in conflict with the national mood and the economics of the decade.

The greatest technological change occurred in aviation, and the GHQ Air Force was formed to project that technology. Much of the criticism levied on the GHQ Air Force focused on its organization relative to the Air Corps. The concept of two masters is difficult to defend, although conflicts probably would have been minimized if the General Staff or chief of staff had taken a more active role. As it was, one commander, probably the chief of the Air Corps, should have been the commander in peacetime and spokesman for all Army aviation. Aside from this issue, the GHQ Air Force was a sound organization that reflects contemporary military structures in two ways. First, the modern Air Force separates wartime operations from the peacetime organizational structure. The Chief of Staff is responsible for organizing, training, and equipping the Air Force, but he commands no combat operations. At the outbreak of hostilities, operational reporting will change as unified and specified commanders assume control of Air Force units and employ their warfighting resources. The division of the GHQ Air Force and Air Corps was based on a similar principle. Second, the perception of General Headquarters

as a mobile unit preorganized and trained to move to the point of attack bears striking resemblance to the Rapid Deployment Force of the contemporary period.

But the GHQ Air Force was not without its faults, the greatest of which, strangely enough, was its advocacy of strategic bombardment. The air power enthusiasts of the 1930s advocated an offensive mission that ran contrary to national policy. Even though subsequently vindicated, they violated the public trust. A military that sets its own policy and objectives is very dangerous in a democratic state. There were also other casualties as the advocates of bombardment continued to push their cause. When bomber performance exceeded the performance of pursuit aircraft in the early thirties, the popular notion was that the bomber could always get through to its target without fighter escort. Consequently, pursuit equipment, tactics, and innovation lagged behind, and the theory was not tested in later years when the performance of pursuit aircraft improved. Neglect by the Air Corps proved costly in 1942 and 1943 when bombers of the 8th Air Force were forced to fly unescorted into the heartland of Europe. Likewise, neglect of attack aviation was still another casualty of strategic bombardment. Once a mission is reduced in importance, the effect is pervasive in the sense that all associated elements, including equipment, training, doctrine, and innovation, begin to deteriorate. Tactical ground support aviation was no exception. In some instances during World War II, the use of B-17s at medium altitudes in what amounted to close air support led to tragic results. Such practices do not reflect complete understanding of the best employment methods for such delicate missions. The trend toward paying little more than lip service to close air support continues today even though it is treated in the larger context of offensive air support (OAS). Development of the A-10 is a

significant step in the right direction, but the aircraft is only one part of a larger system. A greater commitment to offensive air support is necessary to legitimize the Air Force's responsibility in this crucial interservice mission.

Some sources suggest that the budget battle of the thirties was the true motivator in the interservice rivalry over doctrine, but probably no more so than today.³⁴ These were lean times. The entire defense establishment, Army and Navy alike, suffered as the nation sought to rebuild its economy and put people back to work. This was hardly the time to form a totally new government defense agency. The economy was probably the single most important factor in holding back the emergence of a separate air force in the 1930s.

The GHQ Air Force was an evolutionary vehicle that bridged the gap between the flying circuses of the twenties and the mighty air armada that dealt Germany and Japan such crushing blows in World War II. For the first time, airmen had an organization that would allow centralized air control and concentration of resources. They could now test and hone visionary doctrine that would come to fruition in the coming conflict. Thus, the GHQ Air Force is an important legacy that continues to provide contemporary lessons. The Air Force heritage should not be studied merely as a chronicle of past events; it is a viable blueprint for the future.

NOTES

1. Harold B. Hinton, Air Victory (New York, 1948), p. 69.
2. Forrest C. Pogue, George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope 1939-1942 (New York, 1966), pp. 81-2. GHQ was formed in 1921.
3. John L. Frisbee, "The GHQ Air Force," Air Force Magazine, September 1983, p. 162. Between 1920 and 1934, the aviation section of the Army was subjected to 15 independent studies, prompting General Patrick to observe in 1928, "The Air Service . . . has probably been the most investigated activity ever carried on by the United States Government."
4. John F. Shiner, "General Benjamin Foulois and the 1934 Air Mail Disaster," Aerospace Historian, December 1978, pp. 221-230. Although poor equipment and lack of instrument training were causes, poor weather was a major factor in the failure of the operation. The President could not have picked a worse time of year, climatically speaking, to cancel the contracts.
5. John F. Shiner, The Army Air Arm in Transition: General Benjamin D. Foulois and the Air Corps, 1931-35, Vol II (Ohio State University, 1975), p. 379.
6. U.S. Government: Final Report of War Department Special Committee on Army Air Corps. Washington: 1934, p. 58.
7. Shiner, Vol II, p. 383.
8. The Baker Board, like the Drum Board, called for an Air Corps ceiling of 2,320 aircraft, 980 of which would be assigned to the GHQ Air Force. As Major Edmund C. Lynch pointed out in a lecture to the Air Corps Tactical School in 1939, the boards erred in that they did not translate aircraft and personnel into tactical units. In other words, they did not state the number and the type of units necessary to provide air defense for the United States.
9. Shiner, Vol II, p. 405.
10. Air Corps News Letter, 15 May 1935.
11. Report of 1935 Service Test of GHQ Air Force to the Adjutant General, 1 Feb 1936, Part I, p. 2. Andrews felt strongly about instrument flying prior to, and in light of, the airmail disaster. As a commander, he set about correcting that deficiency in both training and improved equipment. The in-commission rate improved during the year from 74 to 82 percent. Although doctrine was an Air Corps responsibility (primarily ACTS), GHQ Air Force played a major role as the test-bed for new doctrine.
12. Benjamin D. Foulois and Carroll V. Glines, From the Wright Brothers to the Astronauts: The Memoirs of Major General Benjamin D. Foulois (New York, 1968), pp. 230-232. The other projects were A, the XB-15; C, the P-38; and D, the XB-19, forerunner to the B-29.

13. Major General Delos C. Emmons, Lecture to the Army War College, 28 September 1939.
14. General Staff (G-3) Memorandum dated 15 April 1936, pp. 3-7.
15. War Department Letter, Subject: Organization of the GHQ Air Force, dated 8 May 1936.
16. Chief of Air Corps Indorsement to the Field Service Report, dated 2 April 1936, p. 3.
17. Ibid, p. 11.
18. Earl R. McClendon, The Question of Autonomy for the United States Air Arm 1907-45 (Air University, 1948), pp. 177-180.
19. Henry H. Arnold, Global Mission (New York, 1949), pp. 152-3. Resolution of the question of command was not all that simple. Several more changes in organizational lines occurred before 1942. Later, Arnold would hold jurisdiction over the GHQ Air Force, but its commander, General Emmons, actually outranked Arnold.
20. W. F. Craven and J. L. Crate, The Army Air Force in World War II (Vol 1): Plans and Early Operations (Chicago, 1948), p. 70.
21. Thomas M. Coffey, HAP: The Story of the U.S. Air Force and the Man Who Built It, General Henry H. Arnold (New York, 1982), p. 207; War Department circular dated 13 December 1940, Subject: General Headquarters Troops and Armies.
22. James P. Tate, The Army and Its Air Corps: A Study of the Evolution of Army Policy Towards Aviation, 1919-1941 (Indiana University, 1976), p. 248.
23. The Statistical History of the United States (New York, 1976), p. 114.
24. Shiner, Vol II, p. 463.
25. Foulois, pp. 288-9.
26. Craven and Crate, pp. 48-50.
27. Ibid, pp. 51-2.
28. Ronald E. Mintz, The GHQ Air Force: The Focal Point in the History of Public Administration within the Air Arm (Air University, 1964), p. 235.
29. The idea of deterrence based on offensive power was relatively new. Speaking at the War College on 28 September 1939, GHQAF's Commander Emmons stated: "A new concept of air warfare, which holds that security can best be attained through offensive rather than defensive capabilities, is receiving consideration even in countries where, through long tradition, their military policy has always been one of pure defense."

30. McClendon, p. 198.
31. Pogue, p. 86.
32. Major Edmund C. Lynch, The Functioning of the Staff of the GHQ Air Force and Major Air Force Units, Lecture to Air Corps Tactical School, 14 March 1939; 1935 Field Service Report, Part II, p. 67.
33. Tate, p. 212.
34. Ibid., p. 251.

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15. U.S. Army General Staff. G-3 Memorandum to 1935 Field Service Test. Washington, 15 April 1936, 145.93-76 at USAFHRC.
16. U.S. Government. Final Report of War Department Special Committee on Army Air Corps. Washington, 18 July 1934.

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